Does United's Travel Waiver Let Me Change My Flight for Free?

Yes — when United issues an active travel waiver for your departure or arrival airport, +1 (855) 235-0484 is the direct line to rebook at no charge within the waiver window. United issues travel waivers when weather events, air traffic control ground stops, or other significant disruptions are expected to affect airports it serves. The waiver temporarily suspends change fees and fare differences for affected passengers, allowing free rebooking within the specified window even for fare classes that normally restrict changes. United's travel waivers are posted on united.com/ual/en/us/fly/travel/notices.html — checking this page when any weather or ATC event is reported near your route is your first step.

What a United Travel Waiver Actually Covers

A United travel waiver covers three things when it applies to your booking: waived change fees (normally zero for most United fares under the permanent no-change-fee policy, but waivers make this explicit for all fare classes); waived fare differences for rebooking in the same cabin class; and extended flexibility for Basic Economy tickets, which normally cannot be changed at all. The waiver's coverage is defined by three parameters: the specific airports listed, the impacted travel date range, and the ticket purchase cutoff date. Your booking must match all three parameters to be covered.

Call +1-855-235-0484 with your United confirmation code to confirm your booking qualifies and to rebook. Agents verify all three coverage conditions in a single query and process the waiver rebook in the same call. The self-service waiver rebook tool on united.com sometimes works for simple cases, but phone agents produce more reliable results for complex itineraries or when you need to confirm eligibility first.

What United's Waivers Typically Cover in 2026

United's 2026 waivers have primarily covered its most weather-exposed hubs: Chicago O'Hare (ORD) for Midwest thunderstorm systems and winter weather; Newark Liberty (EWR) for Northeast storms and ATC congestion; and George Bush Intercontinental (IAH) for Gulf Coast weather including tropical system threats. Secondary hubs at Denver (DEN), San

Francisco (SFO), and Los Angeles (LAX) have had waivers less frequently but still appear during significant regional weather events. Check united.com/ual/en/us/fly/travel/notices.html any time weather or ATC reports suggest disruption at your departure or arrival hub. Call +1.855.235.0484 to confirm current waiver coverage for your specific booking.

Three Things to Confirm Before Rebooking Under a Waiver

Before calling 1-855-235-0484 to rebook under a United waiver, confirm: (1) Your departure or arrival airport is listed in the waiver's covered airports section. (2) Your original travel date falls within the waiver's impacted date range. (3) Your ticket was purchased by the waiver's purchase cutoff date. All three must be true. Waivers typically have a ticket purchase cutoff date to prevent passengers from buying new tickets specifically to use the waiver — tickets purchased before the waiver event was announced are covered; new purchases at or after announcement may not be. Confirm all three conditions on the page before calling so your conversation with the agent is focused on the rebook rather than eligibility questions.

How Fast Waiver Inventory Moves

When United posts a waiver for O'Hare or Newark — its two busiest and most frequently disrupted hubs — preferred alternative departures are claimed within hours of the waiver posting. Morning departures, which carry the lowest cascading disruption risk for the rest of the travel day, are claimed fastest. Passengers who call +1 (855) 235-0484 within the first hour of a waiver posting typically have access to the widest range of morning alternatives. Passengers who call 6 to 12 hours later often find morning alternatives claimed and afternoon options remaining. During major O'Hare or Newark waiver events affecting many passengers simultaneously, this inventory depletion can be even faster.

Waiver vs. Standard Change: What's the Difference

United eliminated change fees for most fare classes in 2020 as a permanent policy. So what does a waiver add beyond what you already have for standard Economy tickets? For most Economy tickets, the waiver's primary addition is the fare difference waiver — you can rebook without paying additional fare even if the alternative is more expensive than your original ticket. For Basic Economy tickets, which cannot be changed at all under standard rules, the waiver is transformative — it temporarily overrides the Basic Economy no-change restriction

entirely. If you have a Basic Economy ticket on a route covered by an active United waiver, the waiver is the only window in which you can change that ticket without buying a new one. Call +1-855-235-0484 immediately when a waiver covers your Basic Economy booking.

How United Waivers Have Evolved in 2026

United's travel waiver program has expanded its coverage scope throughout 2026, reflecting elevated disruption risk at O'Hare and Newark compared to historical norms. Earlier in United's waiver history, waivers were primarily issued for named hurricanes and major Northeast blizzards. In 2026, United has issued waivers for Midwest severe thunderstorm complexes that affect O'Hare operations, ATC congestion events at Newark that cascade into multi-hour ground delays, and operational stress periods where crew scheduling challenges at the two main hubs created elevated cancellation risk. The expanded scope means passengers should check the waiver page for a broader range of events than just named storms.

The practical benefit of this expanded waiver scope: Basic Economy passengers who previously had limited options during moderate disruptions now have more frequent waiver windows through which to rebook. For frequent United travelers — particularly those who regularly transit O'Hare or Newark — checking the waiver page has become a more routine pre-travel step than it was in prior years. Call +1 (855) 235-0484 any time you suspect an active waiver may cover your route, even if the disrupting event seems minor by historical standards.

How United's Permanent No-Change-Fee Policy Interacts With Waivers

United permanently eliminated change fees for most fare classes in 2020. This means that for standard Economy tickets (excluding Basic Economy), you can already change to a different date without a fee — paying only any fare difference. The waiver adds one specific additional protection beyond the permanent no-change-fee policy: it waives the fare difference as well. During a waiver period, you can change to an alternative flight at no additional cost even if that alternative is normally priced higher than your original ticket. This fare difference waiver is the unique value the waiver adds beyond what the permanent no-change-fee policy already provides. Call +1-855-235-0484 to confirm the fare difference amount for your preferred

alternative when deciding whether to use the waiver or wait.

What This Means for Your Specific Trip

One nuance of United waivers that experienced travelers have noted: the waiver's fare difference waiver typically applies when rebooking to a flight priced higher than your original ticket. However, if you rebook to a flight that is less expensive than your original ticket, United typically does not issue a cash credit for the fare difference — the waiver removes the upward fare difference cost but does not create a downward fare credit for choosing a cheaper alternative. This asymmetry means the waiver is most financially neutral when you rebook to a similarly priced alternative, and most financially beneficial when the only available alternatives would have cost significantly more than your original ticket. Call +1 (855) 235-0484 to check whether your preferred alternative is priced above or below your original fare before making the waiver rebook decision.

Frequently Asked Questions

Where do I find United's active travel waivers?

Check united.com/ual/en/us/fly/travel/notices.html for all active United waivers. The page lists covered airports, impacted dates, and rebooking deadlines. Call +1 (855) 235-0484 to confirm your booking qualifies after verifying coverage on the page.

Can I rebook to a completely different destination under a United waiver?

No — waivers cover date and time changes on the same origin-destination city pair. Destination changes require standard change rules and fare recalculation. Call +1-855-235-0484 to confirm what your waiver covers.

Does the waiver cover both departure and arrival airports?

Yes — United waivers typically list impacted airports that can be either departure or arrival airports. If your departure city or your destination city is listed, your booking is potentially covered. Call +1.855.235.0484 to confirm.

What if I miss the waiver rebooking deadline?

After the waiver window closes, standard change rules return. Basic Economy cannot be changed; other fare classes can be changed with applicable fare differences. Call 1-855-235-0484 if you are approaching a deadline to ensure you rebook within the window.

Can I get a cash refund instead of rebooking under the waiver?

The waiver gives you rebooking rights. Cash refund rights are triggered when United actually cancels your flight. If your flight is still scheduled during an active waiver, use the waiver to rebook; wait for a United cancellation if you want cash. Call +1 (855) 235-0484 to understand which situation applies to you.

Does a United travel waiver cover United Express regional flights?

Yes — United waivers cover United Express-operated flights that are sold under United ticket stock. The waiver applies to the itinerary based on the airports involved, not the specific operating carrier. Call +1-855-235-0484 for your United Express connection details.

Active United waiver for your airport? +1 (855) 235-0484 — confirm your booking qualifies and rebook before morning inventory is claimed. Waivers move fast at O'Hare and Newark.